

2. Rejection under §102b. Claims 1-4, 6 and 8-13 stand rejected over Bear et al (U.S. Patent 5,664,847). Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection. Independent claim 1 recites "at least one steel insert." This element is clearly not taught or suggested in Bear et al. Hub portion 30 of Bear et al appears to be an end of the axle tube 32, and part of a cast iron part, not a separate insert. Bear et al appears to have the problem of how to connect to cast iron parts together, discussed by Applicant and solved in page 7, lines 1-13. In fact, there is no teaching of how to attach the hub portion to the "differential housing 16," a separate cast iron part. Claims 2-4 and 6 depend from independent claim 1 and are therefore allowable for at least the same reasons as claim 1.

Independent claim 8 recites different features from independent claim 1. In particular, claim 8 recites a differential carrier "formed as a unitary extension of the axle tube". This combination of elements is clearly not taught or suggested in Bear et al. Instead, Bear et al shows left and right axle assemblies 20, 22, which connect to a third piece, a differential housing 16. There is nothing to teach or suggest forming one of the axle assemblies and a differential carrier as a unitary or one-piece assembly. Claims 9-13 depend from independent claim 8 and are therefore allowable for at least the same reasons as claim 8. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that this rejection be withdrawn.

3. Rejection under §103a. Claims 5 and 7 stand rejected over Bear et al (U.S. Patent 5,664,847) in view of Barnholt (U.S. 5,655,418). Applicant respectfully traverses

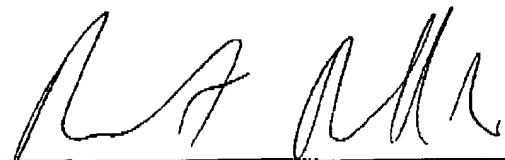
this rejection. Claims 5 and 7 depend from claim 1 and are allowable over Bear et al for at least the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 1. Nothing in Barnholt teaches or suggests at least one steel insert on an axle tube having a unitary mounting module which is adapted to be welded to a differential carrier. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that this rejection be withdrawn and the claims be allowed.

CONCLUSION

The additional citations made of record and not relied upon by the Examiner have been considered by the Applicant. None is seen, either alone or in combination, to teach or suggest the present invention. In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant requests withdrawal of the rejection of the claims and allowance of the application.

Respectfully Submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF FACSIMILE

I hereby certify that this paper is being sent via facsimile to 703-872-9306 on September 10, 2004 to the Assistant Commissioner of Patents, Washington, DC 20231.

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